

An interview with Mr. C.C. Swink of 1001  
Balls Hill Road, McLean, Virginia. Mr. Swink is  
the son of E.F. Swink who owned and operated the  
Swink Mill. Interviewed by Steve Matthews.

Transcribed by:

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**REFERENCE**

Steve Matthews: I am here today, August 23, 1971 with Mr. C.C. Swink of 1001 Balls Hill Road, McLean, Va. Mr. Swink is the son, one of nine children of Edward F. and Frances Magarity Swink. Mr. Swink's parents were the longtime owners and operators of the Swink Saw Mill which was located at Swink Mill Road and Georgetown Pike. This is Steve Matthews speaking. Okay Mr. Swink, the first thing I wanted to ask you was where were you born and who were your parents?

C.C. Swink: I was born at the old mill, Swink's Mill down here on the Pike (Georgetown). And, my mother, you mean before she was married?

S.M.: Uhum.

C.S.: She was a Magarity.

S.M.: Is that the Magarity family that lives . . .

C.S.: Yeah, yeah.

S.M.: In that family.

C.S.: That's right.

S.M.: And your father was Charles Swink then, I guess.

C.S.: My father was Edward Bell Swink, E. F. Swink.

S.M.: Uhum. Your father was.

C.S.: My father was, yes.

S.M.: Now, you were born at the mill, so which one, your sister said they had nine children, so which one were you of the nine?

C.S.: Well, I was the second from the last. That makes me about seven.

S.M.: That's about it.

C.S.: Yes.

S.M.: So, you didn't know anything except the mill, that's where you grew up.

C.S.: Yes, that's right.

S.M.: Can you tell us something about the mill, what was there and . . .

C.S.: Well, I can just remember when the old grist mill, you saw the picture I guess up at my sisters didn't you?

S.M.: Yes.

C.S.: And I was a little fellow and I can remember the old man that had a stiff arm, old man Ormsbee. He used to run that part of the mill, you see. And I can remember seeing the meal and stuff coming out of these chutes down there and he'd put it in these bags. But I must have been awful small cause that went way back. And my father, he had, right across the branch, the saw mill - steam engine down there with the saw mill. And then when the wheel broke on the old grist mill there why, that just sat there and that's all. We stored stuff in it and what not.

S.M.: So the wheel broke on that?

C.S.: The axle, the big ole wooden axle that went through under the mill, that turned the cogs that run the burrs and what not.

S.M.: Were you always too small to help or did you help in the mill?

C.S.: Well, in that part I used to help around down in the saw mill, you know. And later on when I got

bigger, I'd go out in the woods and get a big colored fellow on one end of the crosscut saw and we'd cut down big oak timbers and saw 'em off and bring 'em in for logs, you know.

S.M.: Did you go to Washington or go other places with the wood that was sold?

C.S.: Yeah. And when they was buildin' the Union Station over there, we had three horses, two big gray horses and a sorrel and we used to use those three horses as a team there. The old gray horse, we used him for a saddle horse, and we had him broke with one bind, you know. And I hauled these oak timbers over there for the Union Station when they was buildin' that. They had these little ole steam engines, upright steam engines, and the drums and the cables and they had to have these booms, you know, for to pick this stuff up and the stone. Well, I hauled those oak beams or booms over there for that.

S.M.: You helped cut them out?

C.S.: Yeah, my father sawed them at the mill, well I remember standin' there and watchin' them with those old drums rollin' and they'd pick these - a box of 'em, I was just a kid then, I guess about twelve or thirteen years old. All the way to Union Station, my God, we had three horses and that load of oak timbers. And they sawed them and cut them in eight squares, you know, - they wasn't squares they were so you could put a collar on them, you know.

S.M.: Your sister said that you all sold kindlin' too?

C.S.: Yeah. We'd take and sell that about once a week. Load up about two hundred of these sugar, hundred pound sugar bags, you know, and put them in that swivet and that cut it about so long. In those days in Washington, pretty near everybody had the coal stoves, you know, and they'd have to have kindlin' for starting. So we took a couple hundred of those sacks and have them piled up on that wagon maybe all the way so that if you sat down on the front seat, you couldn't see what was behind you. But it was light, we'd take down around Georgetown there and sell them for ten cents a sack, three for a quarter, you know.

S.M.: The roads were pretty bad in those days, weren't they?

C.S.: Oh yes, that was a dirt pike out here then. In winter time which was mostly when we were haulin' the wood, in summertime they didn't need so much of it. But, we'd take the three horses and maybe sometimes if it was too bad, we'd have to take a partial load down there at Langley, that's right there where those forks of the road comes in there, and pile it off to the side of the road and come back and get the other half and put that on and go down there. As a usual thing, we'd take it down there on Friday nights, then ride the horses down there on Saturday morning, load it up or if its already loaded up, hook 'em up and take off. It would take three hours from here, down at the old mill

down to Georgetown.

S.M.: And that's generally where you sold it?

C.S.: Yeah, around Georgetown.

S.M.: Now, you've spent most of your life in this area, I imagine.

C.S.: Oh yeah.

S.M.: You went to school here, now, what school did you go to?

C.S.: I went to Carper's School.

S.M.: Carper's School, now is that in Lewinsville?

C.S.: No, that was up the old pike, up there about two miles and a half- three miles up the pike. Right opposite where Wallace Carper's farm was. Tom Carper's it was then. You know where the Madeira School is, well it's right down - the Madeira School owns the piece of ground now, I think. It's right down to this end of their property, it's got a white board fence around it.

S.M.: It's on Georgetown Pike?

C.S.: Yeah, on the right-hand side going up.

S.M.: What did it look like?

C.S.: It was just a little one story building, with one room. All of us went in there, big, little. (laughter)

S.M.: Do you remember any of your teachers?

C.S.: Well Grace Mack, I think was the first one and then there was some old stout lady by the name of Miss Harcomb was our teacher.

S.M.: Miss Harcomb.

C.S.: Harcomb yeah.

S.M.: Now when you all went to school, you had to carry your lunch and everything. I imagine you all helped alot around the school too?

C.S.: Well, we had to go out and bring in the wood. And we had one of these big ole long schoolhouse stoves, you know, that stood up so high. That's what we used to heat it with.

S.M.: And you had both boys and girls in this school?

C.S.: Oh yeah.

S.M.: Everybody went to the same school?

C.S.: Everybody went to the same school. And up front, the teacher had her desk up at the end, you know, up on a platform like and they had a great long bench about as long as across this rug (about 10 feet) and she'd call a certain class up, you know, first grade, third grade, fourth grade or somethin', you know - all line up on that bench and somebody down at this end would keep pushin' and she'd push somebody else and he'd push and the first thing you know the one down at the end would be off on the floor. (laughter) And we had these slates mostly and not much paper. We had slates, you know and slate pencils that we used to do our arithmetic and what all.

S.M.: Did you have one that you carried with you, you took it home?

C.S.: Well, we left it in our desks.

S.M.: Did you have single desks?

C.S.: Yes, well maybe there'd be two at one desk and a whole row of 'em.

S.M.: But you had a place to put your stuff.

C.S.: Yeah, it raised up. The lid raised up and you could put junk in.

S.M.: I had a desk like that once. So you remember you had women teachers, they were usually single women?

C.S.: Uhum.

S.M.: Do you remember anything about your fellow students at school?

C.S.: Well, we used to go down in the front lot there and play ball at noon recesses and in the winter time we'd snowball one another, you know. Sometime get in a fight or two.

S.M.: They were things that young kids do.

C.S.: Oh well, but we didn't smoke any pot (laughter)

S.M.: (laughter) You didn't have to really huh. Now, you had a large family, I imagine quite a bit of the things that you all did were family affairs. What about your neighbors, did you have any neighbors?

S.M.: Well, the closest neighbors then was a colored family on the Hill there by the name of Boston and they were real good colored people and they were the closest. And then up between that and the Balls Hill Road here there was a family that stayed there - I think

the first ones that was in there was Houtz.

S.M.: What was that?

C.S.: Houtz, H-O-U-T-Z. And they went out and then there was a deaf and dumb man that came in later on come in and then the next, that was about the closest neighbors. But further up on the other side about a half a mile or somethin', up to the top of the hill up there is the old Jackson place. There was a couple old maids that lived up there, Miss Cordelia. I forget the other ones name. No there was very few people around here at that time.

S.M.: Then you were rather isolated, but you had a large family so you never got lonely.

C.S.: Oh no.

S.M.: What did you do for entertainment, I mean, was there anything like carnivals or did you go to other places?

C.S.: No, there wasn't. We used to go, when we was younger to Great Falls. You know, at the Fourth of July and the Thirtieth of May and maybe Labor Day. We'd get everything and pack up and maybe take the horse and wagon, you know and drive up there and park and spend the day at Great Falls. That was about it.

S.M.: Was that picnics?

C.S.: Yeah, uhuh.

S.M.: Now, the railroad went to Great Falls too, didn't it? Did you all sometimes take the railroad up there?

C.S.: Yeah, well that was later on. There was a railroad

when I was about, I don't know, twelve years old, something like that. That's when they put this railroad through here. I remember drivin' horse and cart when my father had the contract from McLean to Elkins, that's just the edge - that's as far as it went at that time, where the old pike here crosses Old Dominion Drive at Elkins. Then, you can't call it anything now, he had a livery stable there. He used to take people there and haul 'em back into Great Falls from there. My father had the job of going over this and fillin' up the washes and guidin' it out where they didn't pass, you know. I remember he drove one old horse with a dump cart and he had the other two horses to a wagon and a couple of other teams and a bunch of colored men they went along, and most of that was just pick and shovels because it was cuttin' out where maybe the banks waan't steep enough or maybe too steep. And then it would wash out in places, before they put the cinders down and laid the tracks, gettin' it ready for that. Then later on a few years after that, McDonald cut it through into the falls, made the circle there where the street cars turned around.

S.M.: Is that when they built the hotel up there?

C.S.: Yeah.

S.M.: And that was rather a popular place, I guess?

C.S.: Oh, man it was a busy place there. There was

merry-go-rounds, dancing pavillions.

S.M.: If you wanted to have a high time that was the place to go, huh?

C.S.: That was the place to go.

S.M.: Now, where did your family do the shopping for the things that you needed?

C.S.: Well, they had thirty acres of ground between here and Scott's Run down there. It came out here and faced on Balls Hill. We would have a garden down in there and then up at the branch there was seven acres in that ground down there where the mill was. And up that branch along the side there, we used to have one of the best gardens in Fairfax County. And there's where we'd raise the potatoes and stuff like that you know, cabbage- cabbage we'd take 'em and after the fall of the year come, we'd take 'em and set out along there at the side of the branch and then get some pine limbs and put over top of them you know. And you could go in there and cut your cabbage any time you wanted to. You'd just take 'em up you know roots and all, just take 'em in there and set 'em after it had got cold. And the potatoes, we'd fix a hill there and put some straw and stuff down and put potatoes in there and cover them over with straw and in the winter time we'd go out and dig back in there about that much dirt until we got the potatoes out and the turnips the same way.

S.M.: And all those things kept.

C.S.: In the spring of the year they'd start to sprout and the cabbage where you would cut them off why they would start sproutin' out again and then you'd have your greens.

S.M.: That's really amazing, it really is. But you had it all planned out.

C.S.: Oh yeah. Well my father had it all planned out we did the work. (laughter) Then they'd have the lima beans and all that stuff that my mother would can, you know. In them days they didn't have the freezers.

S.M.: I guess cooking was quite a job in your house?

C.S.: Oh yeah, they'd kill two or three hogs and take them up in that room in the old mill there, hang 'em up and salt 'em down, you know.

S.M.: You did your own butchering then?

C.S.: Oh yeah.

S.M.: Now, was there a store anywhere near?

C.S.: The nearest store was Langley, old man Homer down there at Langley had the store. And then at Lewinsville over here there was Mankin's and Besley's.

S.M.: Is that Besler's?

C.S.: Besley.

S.M.: Besley.

C.S.: You know where Evan's Farm Inn is?

S.M.: Sure.

C.S.: That was it. The store was right down from the

house- right down at the road, you could drive right down the road, get up and go up the steps and go in the store. He had the biggest store around.

S.M.: Who made the trips to the store in your family?

C.S.: Well, if we probably needed something we'd get it there, but usually on Saturday, we'd make up a list and go to town with a load of wood or somethin' and stop at G.W. Offert's and get the sugar and coffee and anything that we didn't have at home, by golly that we would want. And bread, we used to have hot biscuits nearly every day mornin', noon, and night. And a loaf of bread in them days, I bought many of 'em six loaves for a quarter bought from the Stohlman's Bread Wagon. It wasn't wrapped, put all up in celophane paper and all that because in them days they didn't know what it was.

S.M.: And that was a bread wagon. Was that in Georgetown?

C.S.: The bread wagon would go around and deliver from door to door at places, people there in town.

S.M.: And so you could just stop it on the street.

C.S.: Stop it on the street and get six loaves for a quarter. Five cents a loaf if you just wanted a loaf of bread. If you wanted six loaves, he'd sell 'em to you six for a quarter.

S.M.: Did you all have cows?

C.S.: Yeah.

S.M.: So you had your own milk?

C.S.: We had our own milk, cream, and butter.

S.M.: Well, they had nine hands to help do it.

C.S.: Down on the same side of the road where the saw mill was, they had a cow barn there where we kept three two or three cows. We'd have part of this down here in wheat and part of it in corn and we'd take the wheat up to the brick mill, that's up there on 7 (Route). I guess they're just restorin' it now, you know, that old brick mill there, Miller's.

S.M.: Is that the Colvin Run Mill?

C.S.: Yeah. There was a little wheat in the wagon in sacks and there was some corn for some corn meal. We'd drive up there and trade - usually they would take it out for toll, you know. You wouldn't have to stand there and wait until he ground that, he would give you so much for what you had and then so much he'd take out for toll. And then he'd have that to sell. You'd get a barrel of flour, a bunch of corn meal in the fall of the year and that barrel of flour would run you through the winter.

S.M.: At that time, there wasn't much communication with the rest of the county with this area here was there?

C.S.: No.

S.M.: You didn't really hear about Fairfax.

C.S.: Sometimes you'd hear about them when the accessor came around.

S.M.: That's the way it is today. In alot of ways I

think. What about churches, were there any churches in the area?

C.S.: The Lewinsville churches.

S.M.: And did you all go to that church?

C.S.: Well, when we went, it wasn't very often.

S.M.: Your sister said that you used to go to Sunday School?

C.S.: I used to go to Sunday School at the school house up there at Carper's, you know, after we got bigger. But that was a walk night and morning, by God. The kids now, if you want 'em to go down to the mailbox and get a letter out of the mailbox, they have to get a car to go down.

S.M.: Now, the Carper School was on Georgetown Pike?

C.S.: That's right.

S.M.: And where exactly, can you tell me that? You said Madeira School.

C.S.: It's right on this lower end of the Madeira School property. There's a little bunch of woods in between the field where they graze their horses and where this spot is where the school was. And there's a road that comes out from Spring Hill and turns, it dead end right into the old pike and it was right there almost across the road from that.

S.M.: Would you say that in the area at that time, there was a social place - did people, the men come into the store to talk?

C.S.: Well, there wasn't too much of that, mostly it was more thickly populated around Lewinsville out there and

it was either Besley's or Mankin's store you'd sit around and wait for the old fellows to come in and beat the gums, there wasn't much of these hippies hangin' around the stores then.

S.M.: Well, you probably remember, I asked your sister too, the epidemic, the flu epidemic in 1918 or so. Do you have any memories about that?

C.S.: All I can remember was is that I was at Camp Lee and they were rigged up on the railroad station out there wrapped in blankets, just like cord wood.

S.M.: Now, where was this?

C.S.: Camp Lee, down below Richmond, Petersburg. I think they call it Fort Lee now.

S.M.: So it was a pretty bad epidemic just about everywhere.

C.S.: Deed it was. My God, they died off down there like flies.

S.M.: So were you in the First World War?

C.S.: Yeah. I was at Camp Lee during that epidemic. We'd go down to the infirmary and get some medicine and line up, you know. And it would be as far as from across the road to the house that you'd have to go to the barracks, (about 600 feet) and they'd be lined up all the way. Some of them would lay down on the side of the road, some of 'em wouldn't get up and you'd get up there and finally get in and they'd give you a big white pill that looked like an oversized aspirin and a glass of water and have you

come back tomorrow, that is if you was able to get back tomorrow. But I pulled through it.

S.M.: You had the flu then.

C.S.: Yeah, I had it. I was in that line.

S.M.: Did you see any action in the First World War?

C.S.: No, I didn't get overseas. The day the Armistice was signed, there was five hundred of us gettin' our overseas examination, and man when that come through there wasn't much examination left, they just put on O.S.S., O.S.S., everybody on their cards. nNo, when I first went in there I was switched to the officer's training school on special duty and that's where I stayed until they got scrappin' the barrel for men, towards the last there and they got five hundred of us out of there and that's where we was getting examined that day. Then I had to stay on, these guys that was takin' this course, they had a preference of bein' discharged then or to go ahead and finish the course, you see, and get their commission. And there was a bunch of 'em that stayed on, and of course, we had to stay on there and take charge of the mule teams, they had mostly then, they didn't have so much of the cars and trucks. They had horses for the officers to ride and they had to have a horse, so when I came out of training school I had charge of the mule barn. Clean up and take the trash down to the incinerator and come back and haul provisions and all that stuff there. Usually they would want a team for this or a team and you'd have to get them ready.

S.M.: What did you do after the war?

C.S.: Well, I come back and went to work as a carpenter and stayed on till I got married and went to Florida and stayed one winter, come back and bought a little house in Georgetown, stayed there about a year or two. And then my wife's mother got sick, she was livin' here I come on out here and stayed with her until she died and I been here ever since.

S.M.: So you have been here most of your life?

C.S.: Yeah.

S.M.: Do you remember the Depression years?

C.S.: Yeah.

S.M.: How did it effect people here?

C.S.: Well, I didn't do so bad, I was working for a jobber in Georgetown there, a contractor, John H. Collier, remodlin' all those old houses around there in Georgetown. And I had been with him for quite awhile, so the other men he had workin' for him hadn't been with him too long and he just held me on and I'd get maybe three days a week, four days a week. Maybe the next week, I'd get a full week or somethin' like that. I didn't do too bad because I was workin' for a good man and he knew that I could do the work. And alot of these rich guys from around there, they would call up at the office down there and want me - they wanted him to send out Casey, everybody knew me by the name of Casey. He had alot of those well to do people there in Georgetown, in the embassies and things.

S.M.: So you didn't fare that badly?

C.S.: I didn't, no. I lost what money I had in the bank at Georgetown.

S.M.: I wanted to ask you, where did the Swink family come from?

C.S.: (laughter) You know about as much about that as I do. I think they originated mostly in Pennsylvania and my father he moved from up in there around Seneca or somewhere. I never did know, never did see the house that he lived in, up in there around called Forestville.

S.M.: That's where they lived first in Virginia was up in Forestville?

C.S.: Yeah.

S.M.: And was that after your father was married?

C.S.: No, he was brought up in there, in that neighborhood somewhere. Then he lived there after he was married, I think all of 'em but, I don't know whether Edward or my sister. There wasn't too many of us born down here at the old mill. They hadn't been down there too long.

S.M.: I see that you have a masonic ring on, did you belong to the Masons in this area?

C.S.: McLean-Sharon 327, I was the second man raised in it.

S.M.: So, you've been a member there quite a long time?

C.S.: Fifty-seven years.

S.M.: Mrs. Corner in McLean, she says that the Masons had quite a bit to do with helping the Franklin Sherman

School, do you remember that at all?

C.S.: Yeah, well there's where I was raised in Franklin Sherman School. And of course, initiated, I was initiated in Barney Storm's store up in the attic part of it. Hot, daggone. They used to go wind up around those little back steps to get up in there. Now, Mark Turner, from up here at Forestville, was the first man raised in that lodge.

S.M.: Uhum.

C.S.: No, I put the benches and the seats in the Sherman School down there when I was working for old man Porter, A.J. Porter.

S.M.: H.A. Porter?

C.S.: A.J. Porter.

S.M.: A.J.

C.S.: Uhum. He was kind of a nice old man, he had kind of a twitch in his eye and he would say something to you and he would bat his eyes like this (flutters his eyelids).

S.M.: Now, where was he located?

C.S.: You know where they have a circle or half circle, in Clarendon, where the circle is. I don't know now whether it's a gas station, I think it's a gas station. Well, when you go around that circle over on the right hand side like you was goin' from up to Falls Church down through, it would be on the right hand side. I think there's a gas station there now. There was at one time, in that corner house there, that's where he was.

S.M.: So he was right there in the middle of Clarendon?

C.S.: Well yeah, that's where his office was, but he had a shed back there somewhere where he used to gather up his scraps, when he was puttin' on weatherboard and stuff like that. And if he had a piece that long left over, he'd put it in his little old Ford truck, pick-up truck, you know, model T Ford and take it home put it in the shed and save it.

S.M.: Now, what about when you were home, what about holidays, do you remember Christmas, how Christmas was celebrated?

C.S.: Oh yeah. We'd have a big Christmas Tree in the old house, down in the front room and decorate it with all kinds of candles and papers and other stuff they'd string around over it. Yeah, it wouldn't be Christmas if you didn't have a Christmas Tree.

S.M.: No. Did they have anything like Santa Claus then?

C.S.: Yes, we were suppose to believe in Santa Claus, when we were smaller. (laughter)

S.M.: How long did your father run the mill, do you know?

C.S.: The grist mill? or the saw mill?

S.M.: The saw mill.

C.S.: Well, I don't know, I guess, after I was grown and left there, they didn't carry it on too long. Then he got this gasoline engine for sawin' up the cord wood, you know the stuff like that to haul into town. There

wasn't too much timber left around then.

S.M.: You all went out mainly and got your own trees?

C.S.: Well, we'd buy 'em from - for so much a tree from Ford Elgin up there at Lewinsville, I mean up at Spring Hill, come back here off of - where the Burling Tract is, you know. You'd get an order for some timber and alot of people would bring their logs in, you know and have them sawed.

S.M.: Did you do that on a toll basis too? When people brought in their logs or was there a fee?

C.S.: No, I think they had a fee then, so much a thousand foot or somethin'. My father used to saw out alot of the wagon tongues. The wagons, you know, and the people there in Washington, Mayfield and Brown and Hardins. There was two of these places there that handle them at that time, wagon tongues, they had horse and wagons then, they was all would go, you know. And they'd take 'em in and saw and they'd be tapered at the end and be wider back next to the back, you know. The axles, the big ole wooden axle that they'd use and then they'd have the metal pieces that they put on the end. Well, you'd saw 'em out in the rough and take 'em in to them and I don't know what in the devil they did with 'em. But, they had some place to turn those axles down at the end so these metal pieces fit on. You could go in Mayfield and Brown or somewhere and get yourself an axle, maybe at a blacksmith shop and have him put the ends on, get your wagon back in shape.

S.M.: What besides the mill and you mentioned a place where you had the cow and then your house was right next to the mill, what else was on your property right then that you all used?

C.S.: Well, there was a horse stable on the left-hand side, you saw in that picture yesterday on the left-hand side. It had four stalls in it and a place up over top to store a little bit of hay in and a little shed on the back. We used to put hay there but most of it was corn, no we didn't get much hay unless we went out and got it off somebody else's ground. Up there at the old Jackson place, they had alot of this orchard grass around through the yard and out in the back and in different places, and they would want us to come up there and cut it, you know, and take it off to get rid of it.

S.M.: Was that the two maiden ladies?

C.S.: Yeah. So, we'd take it down there to the house and make a stack out of it, you know. Stack it and then in the winter time take and cut it down through the center with a hay knife. If you took it off level, then come rain or snow on top well you've got a flat piece of hay up there. You'd cut off a chunk of it, take it down to the barn. It was cold around here them winters. I would walk from here to Washington, many mornings right down beside the wagon.

S.M.: You walked it.

C.S.: Walked, yeah. You'd go across Chain Bridge down there and them old boards on that old bridge, that wooden bridge, you could hear 'em crack for a mile, it was froze so, you know. The wagon tires was screechin' and singin'. And that canal over there would be froze so, you could stick your hand down in the cracks. It froze and expanded, you know, and the cracks would come in it. It don't sound possible but Cockfield used to run a bakery down on Wisconsin and O Street, and he was a great sportman. He bet his partner that he could bake a loaf of bread and take it out there and put it in a blanket and drive to Alexandria before the loaf of bread got cold, down the river. And he did. He took his horse and sleigh and went down there to the end of Rock Creek and went out on the ice and drove to Alexandria with a loaf of bread.

S.M.: My goodness. On the river.

C.S.: Right on the river on the ice.

S.M.: Now, who was this?

C.S.: Cockfield, used to run a bakery there in Georgetown, at Wisconsin and O Street.

S.M.: And he got to Alexandria before . . .

C.S.: Yeah, and won his ten dollars.

S.M.: (laughter) What do you know.

C.S.: And down over the bank there on the canal, between the canal and the river there used to be a big ice house there. A great big long buildin' and I've seen 'em out there on that river cuttin' ice that thick (about two feet). And they would saw it with a

saw in big chunk and then they'd have these grapple hooks these men would get underneath of it you know, and they'd flop it back up on there and they take it and load it on a sleigh with a horse hoof there to slide and haul it up to this ice house and store it in sawdust. They'd put sawdust around and then after so much they'd put sawdust over it, that's where they got the ice from in the summer time.

S.M.: Did you all have an ice house, a place for ice? or where did you get your ice?

C.S.: We had- there was an ice house up here.

S.M.: That was on the property too.

C.S.: Yes, the pond was down here on the Carper place, that was one pond. Then there was one on the Ball's place. It never got that thick cause the pond wasn't that deep. Cause down there I've seen it two feet thick.

S.M.: I don't remember seeing the Potomac completely frozen. I guess things have moderated.

C.S.: Sure have.

S.M.: With all the building up around and everything, I guess, it's probaly . . .

C.S.: No , I think it's a change in the whole climate.

S.M.: What about the Potomac, did you all swim in it or did you swim elsewhere?

C.S.: Yeah. Fish and swim too.

S.M.: Where did you go?

C.S.: Back down here where the Beltway crosses in there, Balls Pond.

S.M.: What is that called?

C.S.: We used to call - it's Doublefield Falls is the name of it, but we called it Balls Pond because it was on the Balls' property, you know what I mean?

S.M.: Yeah.

C.S.: And then down at Jackson's Island, we used to go down there and do alot of fishin', not much swimmin'.

S.M.: Now, where is Jackson's Island?

C.S.: Between Doublefield Falls and Yellow Rock Falls.

S.M.: (laughter) You know the river, I can tell.

C.S.: Yeah, there's Herzog's and Jackson's Island both right in that space there.

S.M.: So you used it quite freely at that time, there wasn't any problem of pollution?

C.S.: No. I had a boat down there.

S.M.: What about dating at that time, was there any place where the boys and girls could bet together or was it just at school?

C.S.: Well, we had up there above, right opposite where Madeira School is, there was a big barn there. And they had turned it into a two-room, made it nice floor and one thing and another. And they built a big fireplace, you could put a four foot stick of wood in this big fireplace. And there's where they used to have the dances. Dances in them days was the square dance, you know, and

that would be where we would go to dance.

S.M.: That was nice then. Convenient.

C.S.: By the time you walked from down home there up to the dance until about twelve or one o'clock and then come back and get out the team of horses and head for Washington, why, you'd just put in two days.

S.M.: (laughter) I think so. Now, the grist mill that was discontinued when Mr. Ormsbee left?

C.S.: No, he didn't leave but the axle, the big old wooden axle is what cut that down.

S.M.: Yeah, you said that broke. But, he did leave after that?

C.S.: The old man died later than that, he lived from up in there around Forestville somewhere. I can just remember the old man, one arm was stiff and he'd have a job tryin' to get his fork up to his mouth, you know, I was a little fellow.

S.M.: Did he board with you all too?

C.S.: Yeah, he lived there. He had a little room up in the upstairs part of the mill, that's where he slept and stayed, but he took his meals over at the house.

S.M.: Sure. Do you ever remember any soldiers camping around your house?

C.S.: No.

S.M.: That was probably before.

C.S.: Yes, before.

S.M.: Your sister mention that, that was when she was

when she was very young, I think too. Now, where exactly were each of the mills, that's what I'm interested in? The one that burnt down in the forties, that was the . . .

C.S.: grist mill.

S.M.: The grist mill.

C.S.: The other was right straight across the road, you know where they - have you been up there lately?

S.M.: Yes, I just went by.

C.S.: Well, you know there's a gate there where they go back into Burling Park there, right down beside the branch.

S.M.: Yeah, down on the . . .

C.S.: Well, it was just inside that gate, right beside of the branch. That's where the saw mill was.

S.M.: So, you were on eaither side of Georgetown Pike?

C.S.: Yeah, the grist mill was on, goin' up that way, it was on the left side and the saw mill was on the right side.

S.M.: Now, on your property you had the two mills and your house?

C.S.: Well, the property that the saw mill wasn't owned - that was all Mackall's property.

S.M.: Oh, I see.

C.S.: See, all that land from down at Langley to Scott's Run or maybe farther on up, all that land in there one time, alot of that in there belonged to Mackall. My father rented this little corner in there for the saw mill. It was right close down there to the branch and right next to the road. No, Millard got the stones out of the

old grist mill, and he put them in that mill up there at Colvin Run. The stones that's in there now come from down there at Swink's Mill.

S.M.: Now was this man named Miller?

C.S.: Yeah, Sam Millard. Millard.

S.M.: Millard. And he ran Colvin Mill.

C.S.: He ran the Colvin Run Mill.

S.M.: And that's where you all went to get your wheat ground into flour?

C.S.: Yeah.

S.M.: Do you remember much before the grist mill broke down?

C.S.: Very little, I was just a little tot learnin' to walk cause all I can remember was that old man there with his stiff arm and that meal comin' out of the chute.

S.M.: But you did keep some of that as the toll?

C.S.: Yes.

S.M.: Some of it was sold.

C.S.: Alot of people would bring the mill corn and stuff to get it ground, you know, and you could either charge them for it or else you could so much a bushel or else take out so many pounds out of a bushel or whatever it was, you know, for a toll. Whichever they wanted to do they didn't have the money to pay for it, why, they let you take out the toll.

S.M.: Were the mills both frame?

C.S.: Yes.

S.M.: And were they painted, what color were they?

C.S.: No.

S.M.: No, they weren't painted at all. They were just natural.

C.S.: That's right. The old grist mill might have been painted at one time, whitewashed probably them days, that's what they used instead of - just mix up lime, you know and put a little blue in it and salt and what not and spread 'er on.

S.M.: You remember about your father. I guess he was a pretty busy man but do you remember besides the mill and the family did he have anything that he did other than that?

C.S.: No, the only thing he did was try to figure out some way to feed all of us and keep us clothed.

S.M.: (laughter) That was a big job.

C.S.: He had a little blacksmith shop out behind there, he used to shoe all the horses and sharpen up the tools.

S.M.: Was that your own horses?

C.S.: Yeah.

S.M.: Now, how many of your brothers and sisters are still living?

C.S.: Two sisters and two brothers, one brother.

S.M.: And who are they, I know you have Mrs. Van Patten.

C.S.: Harmon and I are the only two boys left.

S.M.: Besides Mrs. VanPatten, do the other two live in the area or do they live elsewhere?

C.S.: My brother lives at what they used to call Jewel's Station, down here, and my sister's in Florida.

S.M.: She lives in Florida now.

C.S.: Yes, she's been down there several years.

S.M.: Well, I guess you've watched this whole area kind of grow. What's your impression, how do you . . .

C.S.: Well, I'd like to go back to the wilderness again.

S.M.: Yeah. It's really mushroomed, this McLean area.

C.S.: At one time, if anybody asked me where such a person lived I could tell 'em exactly where to go to find 'em.

I don't know what these people's name is that lives across the road here. People are not friendly anymore. My God, you could go down there, a widow lives there and two girls and a boy, and you'll be out there cuttin' grass or trimmin' flower's or doin' somethin' and I'll walk up to the mailbox, and I'll be from here to that table maybe to 'em, and they don't even know you're inexistence. I spoke to one of 'em there one mornin' and she finally spoke, it's been about a year or so. They've been gone now for about three weeks, I think. I noticed the papers piled up on the front stoop out there.

S.M.: That's just kind of the way things have changed then.

C.S.: Oh yeah.

S.M.: With so many people. Alot different from the days - I guess they were dirt roads that went by your house.

C.S.: Yeah, dirt roads both ways. Georgetown Pike, that old pike, had alot of rock in it, some places it had the dirt, but most of the rocks would set up edgeways when that was built, years and years ago.

S.M.: So it was rock too.

C.S.: Yeah, most of it was, rough as the devil and sometimes the rocks would go through. Down here at Dead Run, that down here below where that little pump station is, that hill up there was red clay. And I think they forgot to put any rock in that because in wintertime, man, them ruts would get about that deep and then it would be half froze. None of these roads around, Churchill Road, Balls Hill Road, none of 'em was paved. I remember the first car that I bought, I bought it in Washington, second-hand Regal, I don't think there was but two made, I did see one more. And I came up from where I was in Langley, come up through Churchill Road, to keep from comin' through this road down here (Georgetown Pike) and I come up Churchill Road and I was runnin' in mud that deep ( he measures).

S.M.: That's a foot deep. My gosh.

C.S.: Run a little while and she'd start spinnin', back up and get another start and take off.

S.M.: That's hard to imagine but I bet it was that way.

C.S.: It was. And this Balls Hill Road here, after I moved out here, by golly, you turn in off the old pike, up here and you'd be in mud there.

S.M.: What was Balls Hill?

C.S.: Well, I don't know, this, I think all this property through here belonged to the Balls, and the hill was called Balls Hill, you see. Cause this place down here the home, was the Balls. They bought from the Balls and then the Burling property back in there all the way to the river was the Balls'. And it didn't go too much

further out the other way before it run into Magarity.

S.M.: So there were some pretty big land hldings out here for families.

C.S.: Oh yeah.

S.M.: Were they living here when you all . . .

C.S.: No the Balls , lived on - you know where Old Dominion Drive comes and crosses this road, there's a big house that sits back up there in there and they've mowed that down most of the way. Well the old house, I think they built a new one in front of it, I think the old Ball house is in that. I don't know if they tore it down or not, that's where the Balls lived.

S.M.: And were they here around the turn of the century?

C.S.: Yeah, some of 'em were. Some of 'em in Richmond now.

S.M.: So that's where the name comes from?

C.S.: Yeah.

S.M.: Well, Mr. Swink, I appreciate you telling you what you've told me, you've been a great help.

C.S.: Well, it seems like a long time.

S.M.: Yeah, the mill's very interesting and it's interesting to hear somebody talk who knows Fairfax County, whose been here quite a while and knows before it was a urban area.

C.S.: Well, I guess it was right rough in them days but you didn't mind it too much. We pulled through.

S.M.: I think so. Maybe better for it.

I, L. L. Swink, give my permission

for the interview in which I have participated on

August 23, 1971 in conjunction with the Fairfax

County History Commission's Oral History Program, to

become a part of the Oral History Collection and be

made readily available for the use of scholars, historians,

and other interested persons.

L. L. Swink